

ACENG'S UNACCEPTABLE APOLOGY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Muhamad Ahsanu
Jenderal Soedirman University

Abstract

This paper is aimed at analyzing the apology of the then regent of Garut regency, Aceng, in relation to his brief marital case from interdisciplinary critical discourse analysis (CDA). These cover Speech acts, Narrative analysis, sociolinguistic considerations, ideologies and hegemonies. All of them are presented successively to support one another to reach a comprehensive perspective on Aceng's phenomenal case. Based on the analysis, it is found that Aceng's apology is not effective, it is contra productive. In terms of sociolinguistic considerations, Aceng's apology is against the common shared norms as it is not coming from his heart (insincerity). In terms of ideology, it is clear that marriage was considered to be a sacred thing to do and therefore should be kept (ignored by Aceng), whereas divorcing is hardly acceptable in whatsoever reasons. In terms of hegemonies, it is also clear that the powerful dominates the weak, implying that Aceng's power was wrongly exercised.

Keywords: *Apology, Interdisciplinary Discourse Analysis*

It is widely held that language plays a very crucial part in our life. In line with this, Fairclough (1989) asserts a strong hypothesis that language is a part of society; so, linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are accordingly (in part) linguistic phenomena. Put differently, critical discourse analysis is both social and linguistic phenomena. By discourse, then, in line with Foucault as quoted by Hall (in Wetherell et. al 2001), it is a group of statements which provide language for talking about a particular topic at a particular historical moment. Simply, discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. Therefore the discourse that this paper intends to address is the notion of discourse as social action (Wetherell in Wetherell et. al 2001).

The impetus of this paper is to search for some focal points related to Aceng's apology to his wife, ex-wife and his ex-wife's family which was considered by many people, especially from mothers' side, socially unacceptable. This search is mediated through an interdisciplinary discourse analysis in which it covers such field as Speech acts, Narrative analysis, and sociolinguistic considerations, all of which belong to CDA. This analysis might give an appropriate answer to the central question, questioned by Seuren (1985), that is the empirical question of how humans understand and interpret utterances. This CDA is interdisciplinary in the sense that it can be

seen as the result of opportunism in the production of knowledge. That is, the interdisciplinary opportunities to produce new knowledge of uncovering the stories within the text and discourse and beyond or behind the discourse (cf. Weiss and Wodak 2003).

The program of CDA is founded in the idea that the analysis of discourse opens a window on social problems because social problems are largely constituted in discourse. The example taken to be analyzed here is the case of Aceng, the regent of Garut who processed a shortly endured marriage and had a divorce in four days after the marital ceremony. This case will be seen from interdisciplinary perspectives and also very much focused on some points in CDA as proposed by Fairclough and Wodak (1997) in Wodak and Meyer (2001), which include (1) CDA addresses social problems, (2) power relations are discursive, (3) discourse constitute society and culture, (4) discourse does ideological work, discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory, and (5) discourse is a form of social action.

Theoretical Framework

Discourse and society

There could be many focus of CDA. Let us have a brief theoretical framework on the relation between discourse and society. Society may be analyzed in more local terms. The social structure may be related to dis-

course in two ways: firstly through the social representations of social members about such social structures, and secondly through the instantiation of social structures through social actors, interactions and situations at the local, micro level. CDA's actual study takes place at the micro level of discourse and social practices. For the sake of this analysis, let us take the conception proposed by van Dijk (in Wodak and Meyer 2001) in which he defines CDA as a critical perspective on doing scholarship: it is discourse analysis 'with an attitude.' This sort of CDA focuses on social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination. It is seen from the interests of dominated group that support their struggle against inequality. So to speak, CDA combines so-called 'solidarity with the oppressed.' Thus, CDA is mainly interested in the role of discourse in the instantiation and reproduction of power and power abuse (dominance), and hence particularly interested in the interface between the local and the global, between the structures of discourse and the structures of society.

Knowledge

There are many kinds of knowledge that we may acknowledge and share. They cover personal knowledge, group knowledge, and cultural knowledge. (Van Dijk 2001 in Wodak and Meyer 2001). Personal knowledge is represented in mental models about specific, personal events. Group knowledge is shared by specific social groups, such as professionals, social movements or business companies. Cultural knowledge is shared by all competent members of a society or culture, and forms the basis or common ground of all social practices and discourses. In principle, all culturally shared knowledge may be presupposed in public discourse. Discourses are like icebergs of which only some specific forms of (textually relevant) knowledge are expressed, but of which a vast part of presupposed knowledge is part of the shared sociocultural common ground.

Attitudes

Attitudes are socially shared opinions, such as the opinions people share about abortion, gender, drugs abuses, etc. These are usually complex, that is, consist of a cluster of evaluative propositions. In the same way as

general knowledge may influence mental models, the general propositions of attitudes may also be 'particularized' as specific, personal opinions in mental models, as is the case for Aceng's short span marriage.

Language and ideologies

It is theoretically believed that there is a relation exists between language and ideology. According to Fairclough (1995), ideologies invest language in various ways at various levels, and ideology is a property of structures or a property of events. There is a textual variant of this location: ideologies reside in texts. While it is true that the forms and content of texts do bear the imprint of ideological processes and structures, it is not possible to 'read off' ideologies from texts. This is, according to Fairclough, because meanings are produced through interpretations of texts and texts are open to diverse interpretations, and because ideological processes appertain to discourses as whole social events – they are processes between people – not to the texts which are produced, distributed and interpreted as moments of such events. Ideology is located both in structures which constitute the outcome of past events and the conditions for current events, and in events themselves as they reproduce and transform their conditioning structures. Eventually, we come to the crucial aspect in CDA, ideologies. Van Dijk 2001 in Wodak and Meyer (2001) defines ideologies as the basic social representations of social groups. Ideologies feature the basic principles that organize the attitudes shared by the members of a group.

Hegemony

The concept of hegemony originates in Lenin, yet this is very much referred to Gramsci's conception. In Gramsci's conception (in Fairclough 1995), hegemony is leadership as well as domination across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society. Hegemony is the power over society as a whole of one of the fundamental economically defined classes in alliance with other social forces. Hegemony is about constructing alliances, and integrating rather than simply dominating subordinate classes, through concessions or through ideological means, to win their consent. Hegemony (Fairclough 1995), is a focus of constant struggle around points of greatest instability between classes and blocks, to construct or sus-

tain or fracture alliances and relations of dominatin/subordination, which takes economic, political and ideological forms. Hegemonic struggle takes place on a broad front which includes the institutions of civil society (education, trade unions, family), with possible unevenness between different levels and domains.

Understanding apology

It is good to understand apologies as contributions to a larger discourse, viewing them from a variety of perspectives. Apologies are particular good examples, theoretically rich as well as practically important. Lakoff in Schiffrin et al. (2001) elucidate that apology places psychological burdens both on its maker and, less seriously, on its recipient. That is the reason for the plethora of indirect forms, in appropriate contexts, recognized as apologies (Lakoff in Schiffrin et al. 2001). Some forms of apologies refer specifically to one of their functions, perhaps as a way to minimize the utterer's responsibility for the others.

I admit I ate the hamster. (Responsibility)

Can you find it in your heart to forgive me for eating the hamster? (Wish for forgiveness).

These cases illustrate the forms available for the performance of the single act of apology. The converse is also true: a single form, "I'm sorry," can function variously as an apology, an expression of non-responsible sympathy, and as a denial that an apology.

I'm sorry, Mr. Smith isn't available today.

Well, I'm sorry! But you don't know what you're talking about!

Some apologies, to be felicitous, require at least the appearance of contrition (sadness and regret). When apology is duly made and properly accepted, both parties come away satisfied. A good apology, in the words of Lakoff in Schiffrin et al. (2003), convinces both participants that their narratives are rational and permits both to have more or less happy endings.

Speech acts

According to Austin (1962) in Lakoff in Schiffrin et al. (2001), speech acts were referred to as "utterances" rather than "propositions" or "sentences." In Austinian speech acts, one of the conditions underlying the successful performance of an apology is felicity condition, or preparatory or essential condition (in Searle 1969). This condition should include such aspects as 1) the

apologizer expresses his regret; 2) the apologizer assumes the responsibility for the act; 3) that the act was wrong; 4) that the addressee is hurt; 5) it puts the apologizer clearly one-down; and 6) the apologizer promises that such a thing will never happen again (cf. Schiffrin 1994; Yule 1997). Principally, speech acts are divided into three types or related acts (Levinson 1983; Yule 1997; Holtgraves 2002; Cummings 2005). First, it is called a *locutionary act*, the basic act of utterance, producing a meaningful linguistic expression. The second type of act is an *illocutionary act*, performed via the communicative force of an utterance. The utterance produced is used to make a statement, an offer, an explanation or for some other communicative goals. The last dimension is a *perlocutionary act*, creating an utterance with a function to have an effect on the part of the hearer, that is intending to drive the hearer to perform something.

Sociolinguistic considerations

Sociolinguistic consideration directly links the social group memberships of the pair involved in the apology and their options and expectations in the event. Lakoff (ibid.) further mentions that larger cultural background plays a significant role in the understanding of the need for apologies and the determination of their appropriate form. For instance, in many societies like in Indonesia especially in Java "honor" is important, and may both keep an apology from being made. An apology is always face-threatening for the speaker; but not making a necessary apology may occasion more serious face loss in the long run. To sum, apologies raise the important question of when, how much, and in what way someone divulges his/her "real self" or private persona to the world via language.

Method

The discussion is presented descriptively in which the available data on Aceng's apology were taken from The Jakarta Post from the mid of November to the beginning of December 2012. The data considered as the secondary data were taken purposively and selectively where the reported case should deal with some kind of apology from the regent and its closely connected effect and responses of the readers, the society.

Findings And Discussion

The case of Aceng, the then regent of Garut, has been widely reported by virtually all mass media either electronic or printed ones. The case also took the attention of nearly all Indonesian peoples from West to East as long as they have access to TV channels. Not the least, the President of the Republic of Indonesia took part "seriously" in giving comments and encouraged the regent and the peoples with whom the regent had the conflict to settle down. There had been more and more people gave their empathy and sympathy to the "victim" and condemned the regent for his conduct and to ask the regent to step down from his current post.

In the course of the "family conflict" of Aceng vs. his ex-wife that ran for at least one month, there was only one time the regent publically announced his seemingly forced regret and sadness. Since this is an interdisciplinary CDA, it is good to start from looking at the linguistic features related to a number of Aceng's statements, seemingly disgraced his ex-wife, leading toward Aceng's apology through speech acts as the following:

"I spent almost Rp. 250 billion to sleep with her for one night. Even sleeping with a celebrity would not have cost me that much." (Jakarta Post, December 5, 2012)

Statement (1) above is said to be the locutionary act, a meaningful linguistic utterance, said by the regent of Garut. The possible interpretation of the first sentence "*I spent almost Rp. 250 million to sleep with her for one night*" is that the regent felt that his sleep with her ex-wife was meaningless for a very short time (though this is not the main reason) and paying Rp. 250 million for that preciousless night was considered too expensive therefore he regretted paying that. So, the idea here is that he should have not married her. The next sentence "*Even sleeping with a celebrity would not have cost me that much*" can be interpreted as the supporting reason why paying that amount was too expensive since, as far he was concerned about the tariff of celebrity a night, sleeping with somebody special referred to as celebrity would not take that much. In other words, the regent might intend to say that "sleeping" with celebrity is cheap. To lay-people understanding, the position of being regent promises everything including money. So, should spending just Rp. 250 million be-

come a problem for Mr. Aceng if that is the actual reason for divorcing her in just four days. The answer is certainly "no". The next question is that what made his one-night sleep too expensive? Wasn't she his wife when he was sleeping with her? Why the feeling of expensiveness came after the sleep?

Aceng's statement in (1), viewed from the second act, illocutionary act, certainly carries meaning or intention especially for Aceng himself. There are at least two strong meanings behind this expression. First, his intention was to give information to the public, to the society, to the people who blamed his ill-behavior, that what he did (divorcing her ex-wife) had a strong basis and therefore he had legal right to do so. What made "her" too expensive for Aceng after his sleep with her was his total disappointment toward her very state. This is clearly seen in his statement mentioning that "He divorced her after he discovered that she was no longer a virgin and she was suffering from a particular disease". Aceng's another intention was to defend his supposed wrongdoing by claiming that his conduct was not against the rules of marriage in Islam as a husband is allowed to do one-sided divorce and this act was not without reason and the reason was something principle for him, that is the wife should be "original". Otherwise, he could not stand living together for he needed a "good" wife who could guide him when he was "out of track".

The perlocutionary act of utterance (1) is that Aceng hoped and wished that people would stop blaming him, criticizing him, condemning him, and even cursing him. He would like the public to understand his position that he was not "really wrong". He needed people to support him and said, "Well, you had the right to do so and we just feel OK with that". He insisted that this is just a small matter and it is a family conflict and very personal and let me handle it in my own way. However, what Aceng underwent was totally the reverse as perhaps he could not understand the people, the society and the norms he lives with.

The effect of statement (1) is presented together with the effect of statement (2) as they look similar in tone and meaning. Now let us see the second statement from speech acts point of view.

"If I buy something and 'Hey, this doesn't match the specs', then it's no big deal if I

I return it." (Jakarta Post, December 7, 2012)

The first act here, the locutionary act, has a complete thought or linguistically meaningful. Take, for instance, the first sentence, the if-sentence "*If I buy something and 'Hey, this doesn't match the specs'*" indicates that Aceng means to inform people that buying things is everybody's business including himself and Aceng further argues that when the things he bought had a defect, not representing the specs when the product was being promoted, then every purchaser had the rights to complain or if necessary to return the thing and possibly exchanged with a better one. This is represented by the answer of the condition "*then it's no big deal if I return it.*" Yet, the only problem that Aceng might not realize was that he did not deal with a brand of certain product that can be treated in a market system, but with human being, his ex-wife and her family and then the people of Indonesia who still have a feeling, a sense of humanity. The embedded meaning in this utterance is probably that marrying and divorcing are a packaged matter that everyone can deal with easily and loosely. And, he assumed that there is nothing wrong, nothing serious with this act.

The second act, illocutionary act, of this utterance is that Aceng intended to inform people, the people of Indonesia, that marrying and divorcing is his own business that can be acted out by everyone else. He meant to construct people's mind that what he did was rule-based, that is based on Islamic law. Probably, Aceng forgot his current status as a public figure as the leader of a regency, the one that should exemplify a good role model. Probably, if the case was done by common people, then not many people would pay attention. Since he is a leader and leading by example is what people call leadership, and that is losing from this country. Therefore, the illocutionary act shown here was not nicely welcome by the people as they are no longer easily fooled.

The perlocutionary act of statement (2) from Aceng's side was that people should have realized and understood the position of Aceng and gave no more complaint and condemnation of whatsoever. The presupposed effect should be that Aceng's brief marriage was no longer questioned as it was legal and valid therefore people should keep silent. From the people's side either from Garut or

beyond were almost the same in which they expressed their disappointment, fed-up, and anger to the shameful regent. Due to his cynical statement, people wanted him to step down from his current post as he did not deserve to be a leader.

Now, we came to the apology made by Aceng when he was cornered when he felt nobody seemed to support him even from his own family. At the moment, when truly felt lonely, he finally uttered his seemingly insincere apology as elucidated below.

"If what I did was wrong, even though it was allowed by Islamic law, then I deeply apologize to my family and my ex-wife." (Jakarta Post, December 11, 2012)

The locutionary act performed by Aceng has full meaning and idea. This locutionary act was in the form of apology using "If conditional sentence" reflecting insincerity. The expression "*If what I did was wrong*" can be simply interpreted as "I did something (marrying and divorcing) and it was right thing to do". This implies that actually he did not have to bother with making an apology as it is only for those who feel wrong and guilty. The second continuing line "*even though it was allowed by Islamic law*" gives the idea that the action (marrying and divorcing) was legal as there is a clear reference for this, that is Islamic law. Then, again in Aceng's perspective, apologizing was something Aceng should not do as his act was not against the law. He is right that the truth is not about breaking or obeying the Islamic law, but more on breaking the heart of the people, the feeling of the people, the sense of humanity.

The second act, the illocutionary act of this utterance is that Aceng meant to inform the people that he has been kind enough and willing to admit that he was wrong (though he is persistent that he was not wrong) and publicly apologized. Here Aceng intended to say that "Well, now I have done what you wanted me to do and please stop blaming me". If we looked at the statement closely "*then I deeply apologize to my family and my ex-wife*", we would see that Aceng also felt guilty to his own family and therefore he also apologized to them for any hurt feeling caused by the case. Yet, he should put his family in the last and his ex-wife first. This indicates that he just feels truly sinful to his family not to his ex-wife, the real individual being spoiled

painfully. In short, Aceng was apparently in accordance with the people's demand. Yet, why did people seem unconvinced and still kept asking him to step down? Perhaps, he was no longer trusted. The people have lost their trust in him.

The perlocutionary effect of statement (3) was that the people would start realizing that it was not fair just to blame Aceng even though he deserved to be blamed. He was just human who was not free from making sin and mistakes and therefore Aceng expected that (the effect) people would forgive him for any wrongdoing, for any wrong statement and for any ill-behavior. Aceng here gave a message that if God could forgive His worshipers why you couldn't do the same. Aceng really hoped that the gossip would end soon and the people would forget the case and forgive him wholeheartedly at last. However, it seems that the people could take Aceng's words for granted, as they still doubted Aceng's sincerity and willingness to do so. People have been so painful that they seemingly could not forget and forgive him. In other words, Aceng's apology was, in the eyes of the people, too late and meaningless. Consequently, his apology is unforgiven, an undeletable story in the mind of people.

The story behind the apology

Aceng's apology has a vivid plot that most people have followed. The brief plot probably goes as follows. Garut Regent Aceng Fikri burst into the news cycle a month ago exactly in November when it was reported that he had taken a second wife, a 17-year-old identified as FO, in a nikah siri, or unregistered marriage, in July, only to divorce her four days later via text message service. After the teenager and her family went public, Aceng claimed he divorce her because she was not a virgin. Seemingly publically questioning a 17-year-old's virginity was not problematic enough, Aceng attempted to defend himself on national television, mentioning, "I spent almost Rp. 250 million to sleep with her for one night. Even sleeping with a celebrity would not have cost me that much."

Soon after this statement, people around the country were blowing their outcry and blamed, condemned and cursed Aceng for his ill-conduct. They considered socially and morally improper to behave like that on TV while he was holding an important post in

his regency. He should, people demanded, be a role model, somebody to follow to his peoples. Because the people considered him immoral he was asked to apologize publically and step down from his current position. However, FO's family seemed reluctant to continue the lawsuit they have proposed to the central police and the court, and proclaimed that the case was closed and said firmly "bygones be bygones." The people might question this decision and perhaps assumed that there might be some "negotiable" reasons among Aceng and the victimized family. It typically American style movie, happy ending. But we don't know who is "happy".

Sociolinguistic considerations

Since this case occurred in Indonesia whose culture is very typical, well-known for being very forgiving, Aceng's decision to make a public apology was considered to be the right thing to do. It is very clear in this case that the cultural background is very dominant here in yielding the apology. Javanese people are known for being calm and non-confrontational, therefore this case was considered "bad" to be prolonged as it is against the shared norms and values of the Javanese people. Aceng, as Javanese person, still considers "honor and dignity" as something treasured therefore he and his party tried hard to find a way out together with his ex-wife family. Finally, having being mediated by a local cleric, certainly respected by both parties in the region, the disputed parties agreed to end the conflict peacefully and apologized each other. Thus, Aceng's apology was, at least to him and his supporters, significant and meaningful. It shows, to him, a dignity. However, the people out there still could not forgive Aceng's ill-behavior. Probably the reason was that the case was no longer between Aceng and his ex-wife, but rather Aceng versus the mothers, the women, the weak, the insane, the human rights, and the humanity. Whatever action was taken, it has to take into account the sense of fairness toward women.

Ideologies

The ideologies of Aceng's apology is that 1) getting married for more than one time is understandable and sometimes acceptable in this country, especially to Islam followers, as long as it is legally done, based on the agreement with the first wife, registered in KUA (Religion Affairs Office), 2) marrying

more than one wife is tolerable on the condition that the husband is responsible and take cares of her "physical and mental" needs, 3) divorcing is never accepted when it is done one-sided (especially the husband) without considering the pleas, appeals, hopes, expectations and needs of the wife, 4) divorcing is considerably accepted by the people when it is believed to be the only likely final solution and on the basis of both parties' agreement, and 5) in general marriage is considered "sacred" by the majority of Indonesian people and therefore have to be preserved in whatsoever conditions, and divorcing is also assumed to be "improper" thing to do and therefore rejected morally and culturally in whatsoever conditions, meaning that divorcing is never a solution, it is just a wrong way out.

Hegemonies

From the case, it is obviously seen that there is a hegemony here in terms of power abuse on the powerless. Aceng seemed to exercise his mandated power wrongly. He was supposed to use his power to optimize the development and improvement of life quality of Garut's people. In fact, he was considered by many to have failed achieving that goal. His achievement was only in getting two wives. In the marriage, Aceng seemed to demonstrate his power excessively by which he could ask anybody he wanted to be his wife by giving illusionary promises to his victim. In other words, power dominance is central in the case.

Meanwhile, the weak, the powerless, the victim was unable to respond Aceng's ill behavior in a balanced way as she and her family kept waiting for the given promises until they lost their patience and reported him to the police and court. Another hegemony reflected in the case was that man was and is still more powerful and woman was, as usual, made as a victim. This is dealing with gender. So, it can be seen that in this country man is still very powerful over the woman. In other words, man is still the beneficiary and woman is the unfortunate. That is the story goes in terms of hegemonies in this country at least from Aceng's case.

Conclusion

To sum up, Aceng's case has been very "sexy" lately in this country. It took a lot of attention from the grassroots to the high

rank people up to the level of president. This indicates that it is a serious case. However, such case has never been seriously handled. On the basis of the aforementioned discussion, it can be seen Aceng's apology was not real, not sincere, it was a forced apology. Therefore, the people did not give their forgiveness although the victimized family did that. In terms of speech acts, Aceng's apology was not effective, in terms of social aspects Aceng was considered to be against the norms and values existing in the society, in terms of ideology and hegemony, Aceng's case truly represented the typical bad exercise of the power against the powerless. In short, Aceng's case can be a good lesson for any people particularly the people in power not to repeat the same mistake. The is gone and it is good to see the future of this country from a more delightful perspective believing that they in power can do things better for their people's better lives.

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